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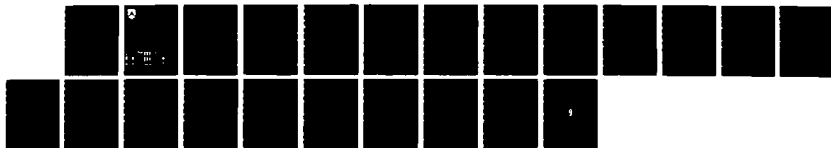
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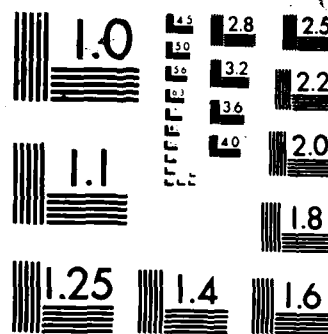
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RESEARCH REPORT

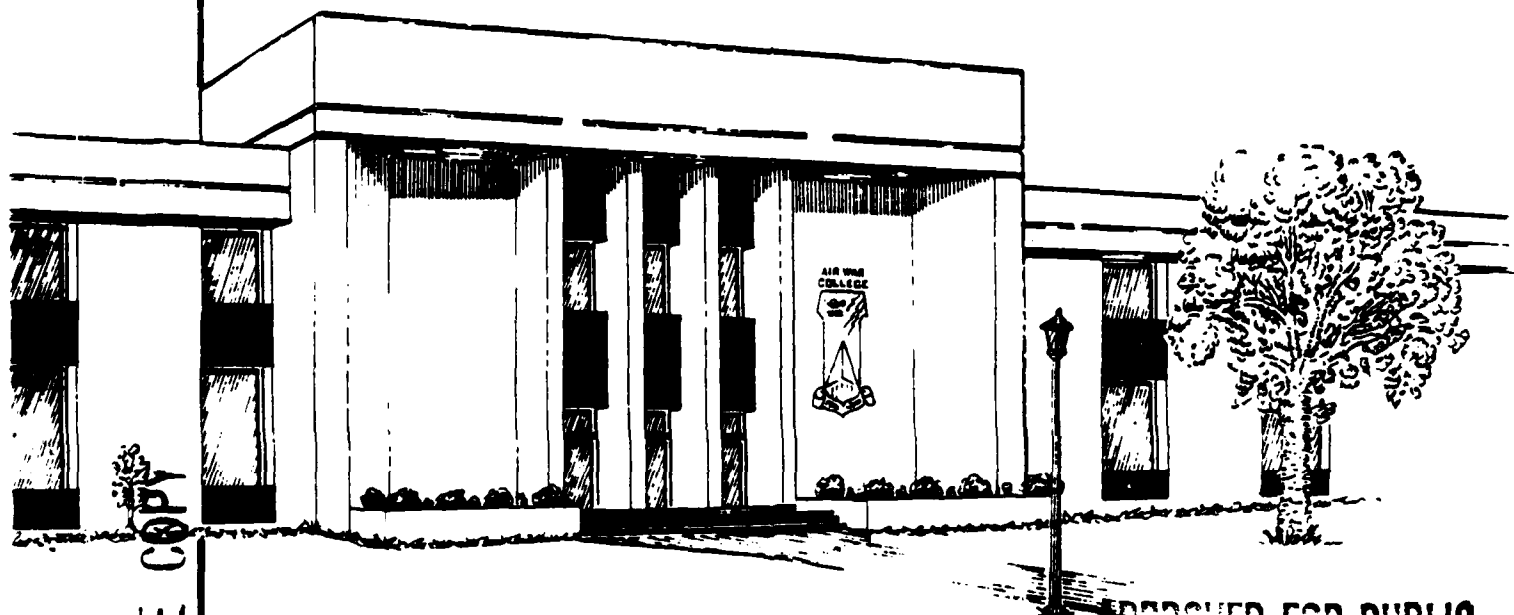
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THE ARAB GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

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By COLONEL MOHAMMED BIN ABDULLAH, ROYAL SAUDI AF



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THE ARAB GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

by

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Colonel, Royal Saudi Air Force

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: LTC. Harry F. Johnson

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

April 1986

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Air War College Research Report Abstract

Title: ARAB GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Author: Mohammed Bin Abdullah, Colonel, Royal Saudi Air Force

A report on the Gulf Cooperation Council discussing the common factors ~~that led~~ to the formation of the Council. It was written due to the lack of information regarding the GCC and its so important aspects of language, culture, religion, customs, and family values.

Biographical Sketch

Colonel Mohammed Bin Abdullah, Royal Saudi Air Force, received his high school education in Saudi Arabia. He joined the Saudi Air Force and was sent to the U.K. for training and graduated from the RAF college, Cranwell. He held various positions ranging from squadron commander to the Commandant of King Feisal Air Academy. Colonel Mohammed Bin Abdullah attended SOS, ACSC, and the Air War College at Maxwell AFB. He also participated in various meetings and committees in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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INTRODUCTION

The Arabian Peninsula throughout known history has always been known as one area. If we examine history of the region, we will find many common factors that the people of the peninsula share. Common factors such as language, religion, customs, family ties and values, politics, economics, and geography all contributed to the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

COMMON FACTORS OF COOPERATION

Language. The language of the region is Arabic, which is spoken by every person in the GCC countries. This makes it easier to travel, communicate, and transfer habits and customs.

Religion. Islam is the religion of over 99% of the people of the region. This contributes to the cohesiveness of the region as a unit.

Geography. The whole peninsula when looked at on a map, consists of one unit that share similar weather conditions and similar agricultural products.

Customs. If we look at the factors of language, religion, and geography, we will find those factors contributed to the similarity in customs for the region.

Family ties and values. Again; language, religion, geography, and customs, all contributed to the closeness of the people of the region. Example: intermarriage was not uncommon across borders as well as the tribal and non-tribal movements from one area to another.

Economic factors. Historically, people of that region relied on three elements: agriculture, fishing, camel and sheep

raising. The people living along the Gulf's shores were mainly concerned with fishing and pearl diving and some were merchants bringing goods into the Gulf from abroad. The majority of the people, however, were farmers, and the main crops were dates, wheat and some fruits. The remainder of the people were Bedouins who raised sheep and camels. These type never settled in one place, they usually went to where the rains fell, which could be anywhere on the peninsula.

Political factors. The entire peninsula as a whole has never been politically or militarily conquered by any foreign state. Some of the reasons for this were:

- (1) The people of the region are difficult to control under foreign occupation.
- (2) There existed no major incentive in the past for any power to occupy the whole region.
- (3) The geographical elements made it difficult to occupy and control the whole region. i.e. weather, terrain, and size.

These factors mentioned above plus recent history which I will also discuss, have made up the most important ingredients for the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

REGIONAL HISTORICAL COOPERATION

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British had control of all the Gulf countries, except what is known today as Saudi Arabia. Even though the British had control, they could not change the factors that were mentioned earlier that were so common to the whole Gulf region (to influence the region to adapt

and accept their own social, political, and economic system), although they tried very hard like they did in India (changing language, economic system, political system, some of the habits and customs); the French in some black African countries, and other colonial type examples.

After the British were forced to withdraw from the Gulf region, and after Iraq made claims on Kuwaiti sovereignty during Kassem's regime, Iran occupied three islands in the Arabian Gulf which were a part of the United Arab Emirates, and after the claim by the Iranians, during the Shahs regime, that Bahrain belonged to them, the Gulf countries were convinced that they must form a Gulf Cooperation Council.

Another common factor which led to the formation of the GCC was the fact that all of the GCC countries are major world oil-producers. The major changes that have occurred since the mid-1970's, socially, economically, and politically, which were similar in all of the Gulf countries, convinced the leaders of those countries to build upon the commonality of their shared concerns of prosperity, security, and well being of their people. The GCC also possesses the similarity of government system which is based upon Islamic ideology and values.

The GCC is thus, unlike other organizations (NATO, EEC, Warsaw Pact). In my opinion, NATO is purely a military organization which has no common factors among its members except to defend the capitalistic system. We find that when it comes to foreign policy issues, each may completely differ. Economically, they each have different interests and conflicts with each other.

Culturally, there is a thin line of common factors between them.

The European Economic Community is mainly based upon economic cooperation and development of member states. Although they possess no common language or religion.

The Warsaw Pact has only one common factor; the complete obedience of the Soviet leadership and ideology.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GCC

All of these historical facts that were mentioned culminated in the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The GCC was founded on the 20th of May 1981 in a meeting in the United Arab Emirates. The members consist of the six Gulf states of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, with its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The meetings could take place in any one of the six countries. The main objectives of the GCC are to:¹

1. The organization and coordination in every aspect and field that would unite the whole region.
2. To deepen and strengthen all the common factors that exist among all the people of the member states in every aspect.
3. Coordination of every field, including;
 - (a) economic
 - (b) commerce, customs, and transportation
 - (c) education and literacy
 - (d) health and social services
 - (e) telecommunications
 - (f) tourism
 - (g) management and legislation

4. Encourage the progress of science, arts, agriculture, marine life, and establish scientific research in all these fields. Also the encouragement of private enterprise to participate in these fields.

The Gulf Cooperation Council consists of three main branches; the High Council of the GCC, which includes a Court of Arbitration; the Council of Ministers, and the General Assembly of the GCC.

The High Council is made of the heads of state of each member country, they meet once every year, unless one of the members requests a meeting which must be seconded by another member. The place of meeting could take place in any one of the six countries. For the legality of the meetings, at least one third of the members must be present. The duties of the High Council are to: examine every matter that is of interest to the participants; establishing the policy and guidelines the GCC should follow; examine, report, and study the common projects that are submitted to it for approval through the Council of Ministers; look into the studies and reports that the Secretary General was asked to do for them; develop the basis for which to deal with other nations and world organizations; select the Secretary of the High Council which has a three-year term and which could be renominated for a maximum of another three years; possess the right to change the rules and regulations of the High Council; approve the internal rules and regulations of the GCC, and also approve the annual budget of the GCC.

Each member has one vote on all decision matters, with the

majority vote winning. The other two branches of the GCC, the Council of Ministers (made up of ministers from each of the six countries), and the Secretary General, overlook the accomplishments listed below that they have achieved during the short period since the formation of the GCC, and to submit them to the High Council for their discussion and approval.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE GCC:

- A. Political
- B. Economic
- C. Internal Affairs
- D. Defense
- E. Education

A. Political

There are many important issues that threaten the whole Middle East region. Examples: The Arab-Israeli conflict; The Iran-Iraq War; problems between Arab countries. All of the GCC countries have taken a joint stance on all of these issues, with their main concern, to solve the problems through negotiations instead of war.

(1) In the case of the Iraq-Iran war, the GCC has supported all of the international efforts through the United Nations, the Non-Aligned countries, and the Islamic Organization, and they also were behind all of the resolutions that sought to end the Iraq/Iran war. Since the Iraqis agreed on all of the resolutions, the GCC has commended them and hoped that Iran would follow suit. An example of this was the meeting of all of the Islamic organizations which took place in North Yemen in

December 1984, for the first time Iran participated and was represented by its minister of foreign affairs. Iran in this meeting agreed to resolve the problem through negotiations, however, when the foreign minister returned to Iran the government rejected the resolution.

(2) The GCC requested help from Saudi Arabia to diffuse the tension between Syria and Jordan, that effort was successful when the Crown Prince from Saudi Arabia traveled to both countries and managed to diffuse tensions.

(3) In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the GCC has had one policy which existed since the inception of the conflict; that policy is: The right of the Palestinians to have their own homeland, the withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories (territories of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon), the participation of a peace settlement of all parties concerned. The GCC agrees to the peace plan proposed at the Fez Arab Summit which was initiated by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

(4) Another example of solving problems between Arab neighbors was when Kuwait mediated between South Yemen and Oman upon the request of the GCC which resulted in normalization of relations between the two countries.

(5) Another issue that the GCC is involved with is the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets. The GCC's stance calls for the total withdrawal of Soviet troops and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Afghani political system, and the right to self-determination under their own chosen system.

In support of these issues, the GCC is constructively

involved with many international organizations such as the Arab League, the Islamic Organization, the Non-Aligned countries, the United Nations, the EEC, and many others.

B. Economic

The desire of the GCC countries to cooperate on all levels of economic development, quality control, and avoid duplicating similar industries, has been a major factor in the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This involves both the private and public sectors. Cooperation and action has already taken place in these key areas:²

- (a) agriculture and water
- (b) industry
- (c) electricity (unifying GCC countries under one electricity network and a base price policy)
- (d) unifying measurement specifications, training and maintenance (car specifications/highway measurements)
- (e) technology transfer and cooperation (development of computers, computer programming and maintenance)
- (f) consulting with the European Economic Community (duties on GCC petro-chemicals products)
- (g) trade, commerce, and customs
- (h) common rules and regulations for airlines
- (i) trade shows and exhibitions
- (j) mail service and telecommunications (prices for postage and duties and cooperation on the use, rules, and regulations of communication equipment)
- (k) development and unifying of seaports and water pollution

(the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea)

- (l) laws concerning real-estate acquisition among the member states
- (m) laws concerning expatriates among the member states
- (n) laws favoring local products manufactured within the GCC over products manufactured outside, providing they are competitive in quality, pricing, and time of delivery. There is also extensive work being done to study the feasibility of strategic food reserves for the GCC. The GCC has gone through local as well as international U.N. agencies to do this study for them. This study should include locations of storage, climate, distribution network, safety and security. The GCC also has chosen Saudi Arabia to be their spokesman in purchasing strategic and essential commodities to prevent escalation of prices and costs.

These areas of cooperation and development mentioned above are but a brief example of the magnitude of cooperation that is present today within the GCC.

C. Internal Affairs

This area is very important and has made substantial progress since the formation of the GCC; although this cooperation already existed prior to their formation. Cooperation on all internal levels which include: passports, visas, identification cards, driving license, movement of vehicles across borders, lectures on safety, exchange of information on criminals, drug traffic control and illegal immigrants. An example of

this cooperation could be noted on the attempt by the GCC to unify the shape, size, and details of the member countries' passports. This should take affect in 1987. Identification cards are now being studied as a replacement for passports across the GCC countries' borders. The GCC has also made strides in sharing information on terrorism through a network of computers and facsimile machines.

D. Defense

The GCC has made substantial strides in cooperation and coordination in the field of defense. Before I discuss these strides, however, I will try and clarify some controversy concerning the topic of defense and security.

Regional security and defense existed among the Gulf countries prior to the formation of the GCC, through the Arab League. There were many events which occurred that substantiate this defensive cooperation. Example: When Iraq claimed Kuwaiti sovereignty, the entire Gulf countries supported Kuwait politically, militarily, and economically; when Iran claimed Bahrain, all of the Gulf countries opposed Iran; when Oman was fighting rebel forces backed by South Yemen, again, all of the Gulf countries supported Oman.

These historical facts prove that collective security and defense measures existed prior to the formation of the GCC, contradictory to the shallow and ignorant school of thought in the West which states that the only reason the GCC was formed was purely for security reasons.

Once a strategist examines and analyses the map and

geography of the GCC countries, he will find that Saudi Arabia has the strategical depth for the rest of the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia is the biggest in size, population, and resources. The rest of the Gulf countries, each by itself, are very vulnerable and militarily weak in size and population. And in my view, as a military officer, the external threats to the Gulf region come from Israel, Iran, Russia, and others. Therefore, the GCC strongly believes that the defense and protection of the Gulf must be under their own control and that no power in the world should dictate how the GCC members should provide for their own security. In order to establish their own security the GCC countries have selected some committees to look into various fields of cooperation between the air force, army, and navy, and to establish some form of joint command. Recently a joint Gulf Rapid Deployment Force was established and a joint command for this force. One of the outcomes of this cooperation has been the various joint military exercises and maneuvers that have taken place in various countries of the GCC.

The military power of the GCC countries is small and young compared to the existing external threats that I have stated earlier. The GCC countries are relying on very advanced and effective military power; i.e. quality vs. quantity, massive joint exercises, unification of military equipment, unification of command and training, and increasing the technical knowledge of military personnel. The people and the governments of the Gulf region have a strong faith in the future of their military power and cooperation.

E. Education

Education is one of the most important elements within the GCC. The cooperation and coordination that have already been established surpasses in priority any other field. The field of education includes and stresses: Islamic beliefs and ideology, family ties, loyalty to the country, facilities for the handicapped, a joint effort to improve the level of technical institutions, artisan institutions, improving and unifying as much as possible curriculum and school scheduling, unifying the salaries to be paid to contract instructors as well as to local instructors.

At present the GCC is studying a system by which students at each grade level in the GCC countries' public school system are at compatible minimum levels of education. Also a committee is set up and approved to look into the recognition of university diplomas throughout the Gulf countries. The GCC countries have also agreed to finance and build a new university that is highly specialized in technology and which will be located in Bahrain. The participation of the GCC in meetings and seminars that concern education on a regional and international level also contributes to the field of education. The GCC are also working now on a specialized program which will increase the competency and level of education for teachers of the handicapped.

CONCLUSION:

I have reviewed the most important aspects of the cooperation of the GCC; political, economic, internal affairs, defense, and education. Although as I have stated earlier,

there are many other fields and areas of cooperation between the Gulf countries, administered by the top officials and leaders of each country. Also, in my opinion, strong cooperation will not guarantee the internal existence of any system in the world unless that system satisfies the majority of the people. What this Gulf cooperation serves and preserves is the interest and well-being of the Gulf people by building upon their common factors of:

- (1) Islamic beliefs, values, and ideology
- (2) language
- (3) family ties and values
- (4) customs
- (5) economic and political

Unfortunately, many nations today respect strength and power only; the GCC countries, as one unit, will be more powerful militarily, politically, and economically. This gives the GCC great respect and influence, in the region as well as on the world scene.

The GCC has achieved unity in so many areas and fields based upon mutual respect, dignity, and well-being to each member state, and God willing, the GCC will be the model for the whole world to follow.

Footnotes

¹The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Secretariat General. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 1985 (Arabic Booklets).

²The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. Secretariat General. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 1985.

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1. Report on the Gulf Cooperation Council for the States of Gulf. Secretariat General (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1985).
2. Martin, Lenore G. "The Unstable Gulf". Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts. 1984.

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